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ABSTRACT

Noting the fragile relationship between parent participation and school reform, this book tells the story of the Charquin Program, an alternative public school program in Hayward, California, dedicated to parent participation and notable for its open classroom structure and intensely democratic practice. The introduction relates the history and philosophy of the program, as well as the many changes it has undergone since its founding in 1973. The first section illustrates the typical early morning routine at Charquin by describing the school environment, activities, and staff. The second section provides several examples of parents' contributions to the program. The third section outlines the Charquin curriculum, a whole-language approach to literacy with fewer distinctions among disciplines and more emphasis on the arts than traditionally structured programs. The dynamic, nontraditional nature of the Charquin classroom environment is discussed in the fourth section, and the organization and responsibilities of the Charquin Parent Group, which is the policy-making body of the program, are explained in the fifth section. The sixth section discusses the tradition and development of the familylike character of the Charquin program. The seventh section examines the issues of student assessment and program assessment. The book's final section reflects on the challenges and issues associated with developing alternative programs like Charquin. (TJQ)

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